details of total subsidies on goods and services, treating all unrecovered costs in the provision of non-public goods by Government as subsidies. Total subsidies were estimated at Rs. 1,04,913 crore for 2002-03 and Rs. 1,15,824 crore in 2003-04. However, subsidies explicitly mentioned in the budget documents were Rs. 43,533 crore in 2002-03 and Rs. 44,256 crore in 2003-04. Periodic assessment of impact of various schemes on the beneficiaries, including the poor, are carried out by Government organisations like the Programme Evaluation Organisation, Planning Commission, expert bodies and research institutes.

(c) The report on subsidies contains some important findings of the impact assessment studies. Government propose to evolve a policy for targeting subsidies based on discussions and consultations with various stakeholders, after a careful assessment of the likely impact of alternative proposals.

Performance of Kisan Credit Card scheme

2245. SHRIMATI JAYA BACHCHAN: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) what has been the performance so far of the Kisan Credit Card schemes and the extent of its acceptance by farmers;

(b) what is the credit limit and the rate of interest under the scheme;

(c) whether the scheme is available throughout the country and if not, the reasons therefor; and

(d) whether Government are considering any proposal to extend it to all parts of the country and if so, by when?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme has emerged as a widely accepted mechanism for delivery of hassle-free crop loan to farmers. The scheme introduced in August, 1998 as an innovative credit delivery mechanism, has been progressing satisfactorily. About 4.80 crore KCCs have been issued till 31st January, 2005. The scope of the scheme has been recently enlarged to cover the term loans for agriculture and allied activities including a reasonable component to meet consumption needs besides the existing facility of providing crop loan limit.

(b) No ceiling has been envisaged for sanction of credit limit under the scheme. However, the banks may fix the credit limit to farmers on the basis of their land holding, cropping pattern and scale of finance recommended by the District Level Technical Committee. The Co-operative Banks also take into account the individual maximum borrowing power fixed by the Registrar of the Co-operative Societies while fixing the credit limit under the scheme which may vary from State to State. As the interest rate regime has been deregulated by the Reserve Bank of India, banks have been provided freedom to fix the rate of interest on credit limit sanctioned. Hence, no uniform rate of interest is applicable to KCC in respect of Co-operative Banks and regional Rural Banks. However, Commercial Banks cannot charge interest rate exceeding their Benchmark Prime Lending Rate (BPLR) for the loans up to Rs. 2.00 lakh.

(c) and (d) The scheme is applicable all over the country.

VAT monitoring committees in States

2246. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government would set up VAT monitoring committees in every State and Union Territory to ensure that genuine invoices are raised to completely stop evasion of payment of VAT in any form; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) and (b) VAT is a State level tax reform measure. Therefore, any action on setting up VAT monitoring committees in every State and Union Territory to ensure that genuine invoices are raised to completely stop evasion of payment of VAT in any form is to be taken by the concerned State Government/UT Administration. The Empowered Committee of State Finance Ministers has decided that States should set up a "VAT Cell", *inter-alia*, to track revenue performance.

Acquisition of shareholding in foreign banks

2247. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether public sector banks are permitted to acquire wholly or acquire majority shareholding in foreign banks overseas; and